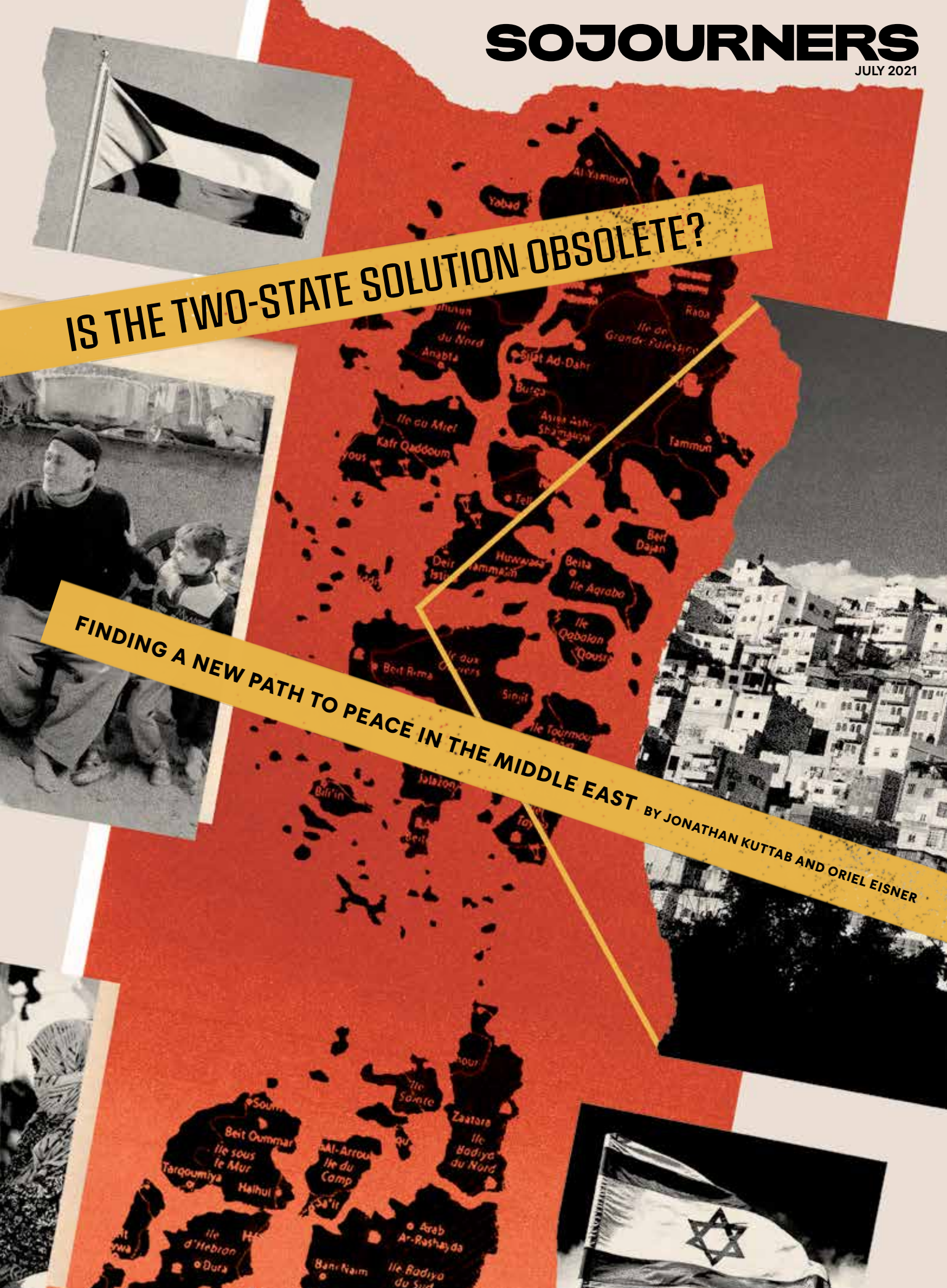


IS THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION OBSOLETE?

FINDING A NEW PATH TO PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST BY JONATHAN KUTTAB AND ORIEL EISNER



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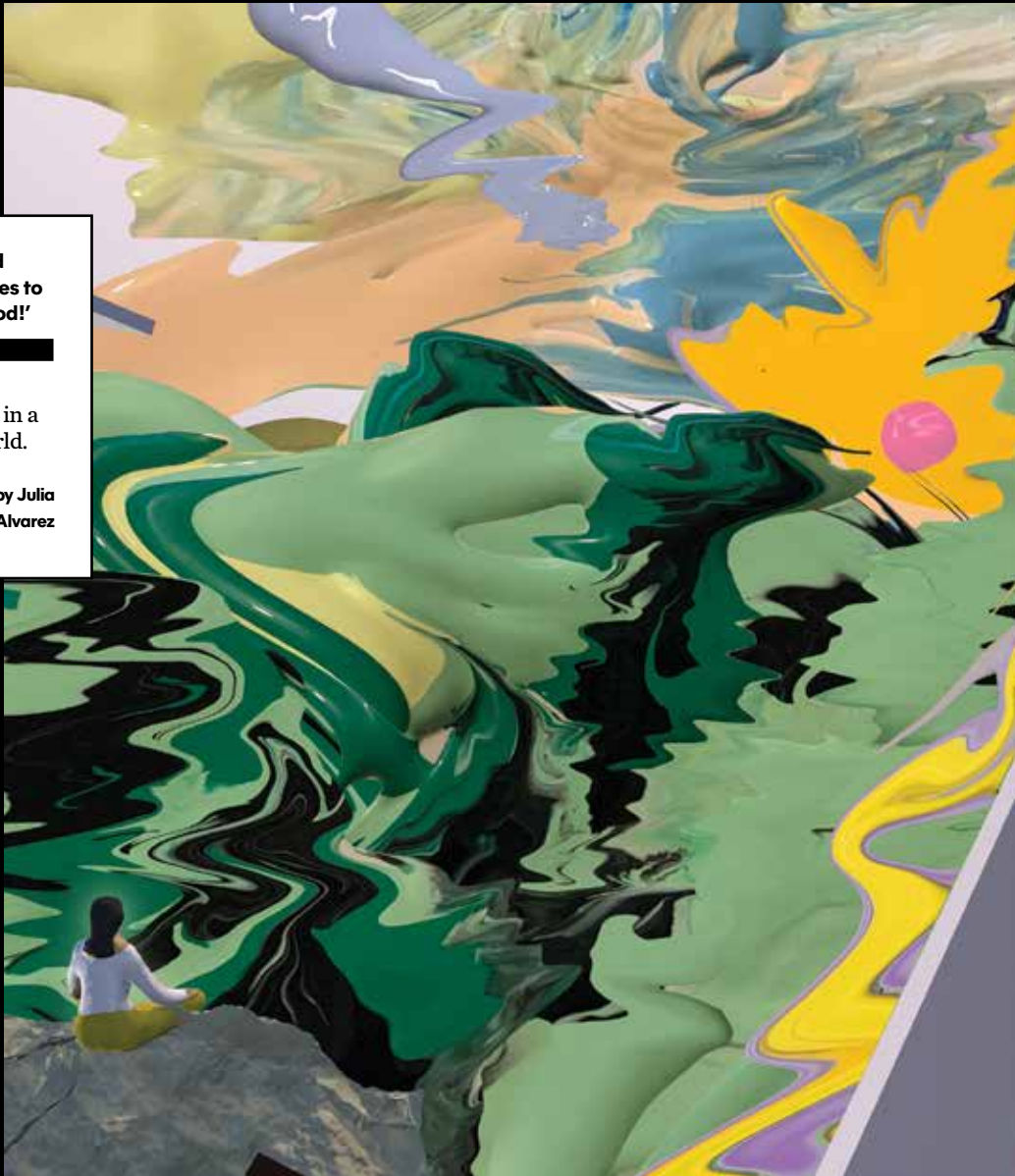


**"THIS BEING HUMAN IS A GUEST HOUSE.
EVERY MORNING A NEW ARRIVAL."**

**'A Thousand
Opportunities to
Return to God!'**

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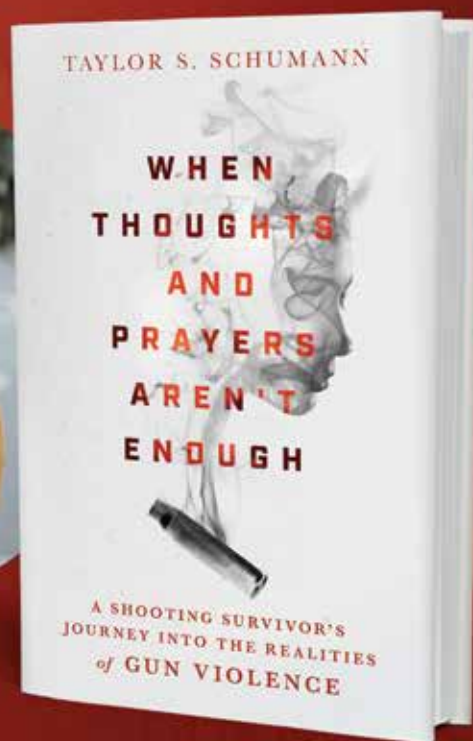


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From the Editor

One of the most misleading words in the recent explosion of violence between Israel and Hamas is “conflict.” There is no symmetry or equivalence between desperate rocket attacks, deplorable as they are, from Hamas and the massive, disproportionate blitzkrieg by the region’s dominant military power. And, as usual, the casualties in such attacks were disproportionate as well: More than 20 times as many Palestinians, including many children, were killed, most of them predictable deaths from Israeli air force strikes on population centers in the Gaza Strip.

The bloodshed has sparked renewed calls for the “two-state solution”—the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. But, as Palestinian-American Jonathan Kuttab and American-Israeli Oriel Eisner explain in this issue, Israeli settlements have made the two-state approach impossible, and thus made clear the need for a shift in our thinking. As Kuttab writes, new thinking “would require each group to sufficiently empathize with and understand the hopes, fears, interests, and aspirations of the other group.” This spring’s violence makes painfully evident why such new thinking is urgently needed.

RESPONSE

A True Apostle

“As a teenager, I met Fr. Dan Berrigan and have long loved his poetry and been motivated by his peace work, but I did not know about his hands-on service and comfort to the dying,” Beth Call wrote in response to “The Bread of Life in the Breach of Death” (by Patrick Henry, May 2021). “He was a true apostle of Christ.” John Olsen echoed Call’s sentiment: “A more perfect example of emulating Jesus would be hard to find.” Martina Nicholson was in medical residency during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. “Many staff and caregivers were afraid to touch the patients, worried about contagion,” Nicholson wrote. “The story of the man asking to have his face held in the hands of Fr. Berrigan, as a witness and a gift, brought tears to my eyes.”

Write us: response@sojo.net

*“I grew up thinking that the
body and the spirit were at odds
with one another.”*



—Marianne Chan

"KEEP SOME ROOM IN YOUR HEART FOR THE UNIMAG- INABLE."

Mary Oliver
Poet

CONTRIBUTING



Nate Palmer

"It's an intimate connection that you create when you take that picture," photographer Nate Palmer says (p. 24). He began taking pictures of his friends with a point-and-shoot camera when he was 12. Now 27, his work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, and *Rolling Stone*. "There's a level of tenderness and love that I'm always trying to capture," he says. "Being a Black person, photographing mostly Black people, I think that's really important. It's one of the reasons that I keep making work."



Jonathan Kuttub

"I work for prisoners and the marginalized out of Matthew 25:36, but I do so in secular terms and with secular or Muslim colleagues," says Jonathan Kuttub (p. 30), a Palestinian Christian and human rights attorney whose work is guided by his faith. His belief in a future beyond the two-state solution, even in the context of oppression and violence, comes from witnessing that "the vast majority of interactions between Jews and Arabs have been fruitful, neighborly, and humane."

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Number of meditation apps launched since 2015

100 million

Number of times the popular meditation app Calm has been downloaded since launch in 2012

\$195 million

Aggregate amount the top 10 meditation apps earned in 2019

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The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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HEARTS & MINDS

BY JIM WALLIS

POLICING ON TRIAL

Nearly a year after the death of George Floyd, a jury found his killer, former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, guilty of all charges. My initial reaction was relief—that this trial, which felt so momentous, had concluded with accountability for Chauvin’s crime—but for many of us, relief was tempered by real sorrow and anger at knowing that this accountability will not bring Floyd back to his loved ones and community. And while a single verdict is a long way from justice for a brutal and broken system in which police kill 1,000 people every single year, this verdict could, should, and must open the door to long overdue transformation of policing and criminal justice in America—and we should settle for nothing less.

It is critical to remember the extraordinary forces that led to this verdict—it *should not take so much* to

**IT SHOULD NOT
REQUIRE SUCH A
VIDEO TO ENSURE
ACCOUNTABILITY
WHEN THE POLICE
REGULARLY COMMIT
VIOLENCE AGAINST
PEOPLE OF COLOR.**

“JUSTICE REQUIRES REPAIR, RESTORATION, AND TRANS- FORMATION.”

convict police for abuse and lethal violence against Black people and other people of color. It took a dramatic and painful video that the world watched over and over, extending the trauma of Floyd's family and friends to millions of others. It took police leaders taking a highly unusual stand against an officer in their own department, when that should be normal in a case like this. It took overwhelming and incontrovertible evidence. All this shows just how hard it is to convict police officers who violate and kill Black and brown Americans, which remains the common practice of American law enforcement. It should not take such a video, or a world-changing movement in response, to ensure accountability when the police regularly commit such violence against citizens of color.

We are clearly nowhere near approaching justice yet and must not rest until we are. The jurors in

Chauvin's trial recognized George Floyd's humanity, and that is what it will take to change our law enforcement and criminal justice systems. As followers of Jesus, we must commit to protect and affirm the foundational belief that Floyd, and every person, is made in God's very likeness and image. This deep spiritual and theological commitment requires all Christians to work toward dismantling the criminalization and dehumanization of Black lives. Justice requires repair, restoration, and transformation. The moment must lead to more than just a verdict in one case. The moment of Birmingham led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The moment of Selma led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And the verdict in the trial of George Floyd's murder must lead to the moral and legal transformation of our policing system. Otherwise, it will just be another moment of trauma, pain, and despair, instead of a harbinger of hope.

Let's be clear: George Floyd should not have had to die for the mere possibility that our society could take a better path forward. We must now earnestly and ceaselessly work and pray until the killing of Black and brown people by the police is a shameful memory rather than a daily reality. ♦



Jim Wallis is founder and ambassador of Sojourners.

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'IT'S TIME FOR US TO ACT'

The rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans has spurred Christians to step up against the violence.



2

Deadly shootings in Atlanta this spring left eight dead, including six women of Asian ancestry. In the aftermath, Rev. Byeong Cheol Han, lead pastor of Atlanta's Korean Central Presbyterian Church, exhorted his congregation to "not just pray, not just worry," because "it's time for us to act." Han continued, "I'm going to urge people with love and peace that we need to step up and address this issue, so that ... our next generation should not be involved in tragic ... violence. ... That's what Christians need to do."

Han wasn't alone. Similar calls to action have been amplified throughout Asian American churches. This heightened awareness of faith and culture's entanglement with sociopolitical realities signals a call to redefine the essential meaning of Asian American Christianity.

For many first-generation Asian immigrants, ethnic-specific churches foster communities of care and cultural preservation essential for survival. For second- and third-generation Asian Americans, our faith provides spiritual resources for negotiating a cultural

identity between a majority culture that never fully accepted us and a similarly foreign minority culture from distant shores. Some Asian American theologies focus on this liminality and how God's presence is with those stuck between worlds.

The recent surge in anti-Asian hate is a reminder that such liminality also increases vulnerability to the whims of the majority's gaze and the world's geopolitics. Whether we like it or not, Asian American experience is subject to events taking place across Asia. For example, the coronavirus began in China and exploded across the globe. As China attempts to build its own sense of empire against waning U.S. dominance, the pandemic became highly politicized. Asian Americans, not only Chinese Americans, have been caught in the conflict. Stop AAPI Hate, a leading aggregator of coronavirus-related hate incidents against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, reported 6,603 incidents between March 2020 and the end of March 2021. More than 2,800 of those occurred in March this year.

While Asian American churches foster communities of care and cultural heritage, Asian American Christianity is and must be political and transnational.

The term "Asian American" began as a racial category in the early 1900s, used to collectively stereotype diverse peoples to justify anti-immigration policies, such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act that was a prototype to bar immigrants from other Asian countries until 1965. During the civil rights movement, Asian Americans claimed this term for themselves to strengthen unity out their shared immigrant struggle and to combat accusations of "yellow peril" linked to the wars in Korea and Vietnam. Was there any other way to bring Indian, Filipino, and Chinese Americans under a single identity? Cognizant of their interconnections, Asian Americans such as Detroit-activist Grace Lee Boggs and social justice leader Yuri Kochiyama marched alongside African Americans in common cause.

Moreover, the early Asian American movement was also transnational. Asian American activists tied their pursuit of justice in the U.S. with similar struggles in South Korea, the Philippines, and other regions resisting oppressive regimes. Roy I. Sano, a United Methodist bishop and internment camp survivor, was a prominent

ANTI-ASIAN HATE IS A REMINDER OF OUR VULNERABILITY TO THE WHIMS OF THE MAJORITY'S GAZE.

faith organizer among these networks.

Considering this history, Asian American Christianity must reclaim and proclaim a sociopolitical vision for what God has done and will do in and through Asian American experience.

Historians Jane Hong, Melissa Borja, and Helen Jin Kim are reframing the history of American religion and its impact on society through Asian American perspectives. Sociologists Russell M. Jeung and Jerry Z. Park have advanced the study of Asian American Christian life. Theologian David C. Chao is convening new conversations on the lived theologies grounded in Asian American experiences, which include issues of social injustice. Jonathan Tran's forthcoming book, *Asian Americans and the Spirit of Racial Capitalism*, utilizes ethnographic studies of Asian American congregations to identify their place in larger systems of racial and class hierarchies. Pastoral activists Raymond Chang and Michelle Reyes of the Asian American Christian Collaborative and Sung Yeon Choimorrow of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum lead from both the pulpit and the streets.

While faith is foundational to Asian American Christian identity, we are more than inherited doctrines and practices. We are histories and genealogies of places and people near and far. We are embedded in social structures and hierarchical systems that confine us to race and nationality.

Asian American Christians cannot naively discard these earthly contingencies for a heavenly home. We must embrace a political and transnational Asian American Christianity that questions and analyzes the world in a way that honors our allegiance to God, our cultural heritage, and our socio-political conditions. ✪

Easten Law is assistant director of academic programs at the Overseas Ministries Study Center at Princeton Theological Seminary.

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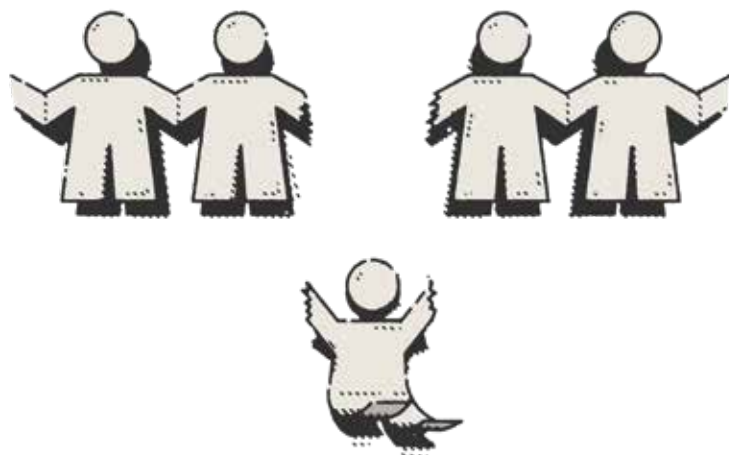
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SOJOURNERS

COMMENTARY

BY STARSKY WILSON



WHERE DOES IT HURT?

**Children are the poorest age group in the U.S.
What are we doing to do about it?**

One of the most most frustrating times as a parent was when one of my toddlers would begin to cry and I was in the next room. Of course, I would rush right over. But once I got there, I wasn't sure whether they were sick or had bumped into the couch. Between the pain, early language development, and their weeping, it was hard to diagnose the situation. I relied on a question my toddler could answer by pointing: "Where does it hurt?"

As we—adults, parents, faith leaders, and communities—rush to enter a post-pandemic reality, we would do well to pause and ask young people how the last year and a half has impacted them. Patient listening may lead to prophetic grief. As the prophet Jeremiah reminds, "For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me" (8:21).

For 30 years, the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) has plumbed the best available research to answer this question for young people: Where does it hurt? CDF's "State of America's Children" report, released this spring, analyzes this data and paints a picture of child well-being and our challenges ahead. The information makes clear that our children have not been immune to the crises of public health and racial injustice we have faced. As of February of this year, 13 percent of the COVID-19 cases in the U.S. were children. They are hurting physically, socially, emotionally, and economically.

Frankly, we were not meeting children's needs *before* these crises. Black and brown children bore the brunt of our neglect. Children are the poorest age group in the country. Nearly 1 in 7 children live in poverty and nearly 71 percent of them are children of color. More than 1.5 million students in public schools experienced homelessness during the 2017-18 school year—but Black youth were 83 percent more likely than others to be unhoused. Nearly 11 million children live in homes without reliable access to sufficient and nutritious food. Black and Hispanic children are twice as likely to lack nourishment than their white playmates.

It's enough to make us weep and mourn. But, as theologian Otis Moss Jr. argues when reading Jeremiah, "Prophetic grief is different from pathetic grief." In prophetic grief, "we stand inside of the other's wounds, and hurt, and blood, and tears, and sorrow, so deeply that it becomes our own. We ask others, 'Where does it hurt?'"

The last year magnified longstanding inequities and pain. It also stirred empathy—the beginning of action. This empathy led Congress to expand the Child Tax Credit (CTC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, housing vouchers, and other emergency relief for families in March as part of the stimulus package. The increased investment in well-being could cut child poverty in the U.S. in half and must now be sustained for our youth and future.

As we feel the pain of our progeny, let us envision a nation where marginalized children flourish, leaders prioritize their well-being, and communities wield the power to ensure children thrive.

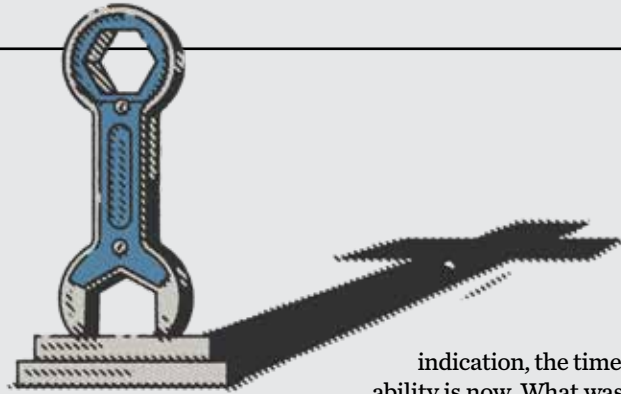
In this vision, the expanded CTC would be made permanent to ensure a guaranteed income for households raising children. Congress would expand housing vouchers and affordable housing for every family who needs it. Permanent, universal, free school meals would make access to nourishment possible so children can learn and grow. Imagine the smiles on children's faces these changes would bring.

Change is possible now (and with this Congress) if people of faith will turn pathetic grief into prophetic grief. It begins by asking our children, "Where does it hurt?"

Rev. Starsky Wilson is president of the Children's Defense Fund, which convenes the annual Samuel DeWitt Proctor Institute for Child Advocacy Ministry.

I

WIDOWS, ORPHANS, AND AN HONEST DAY'S PAY



If Jesus had been in Bessemer, Ala., he would have stood with the workers who tried and failed to organize the Amazon distribution center there.

That was the firm conviction of Joshua Brewer, a lead organizer for the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union (RWDSU). “It’s everything we’re told to do—to look out for our brothers and sisters in need, that a [person] should be paid for an honest day’s work an honest day’s wage, that we need to look out for the immigrant, that we need to look out for the widows and the children and the orphans, and we need to look out for each other,” Brewer told the *Alabama Political Reporter* in the heat of the campaign.

Brewer was hardly alone in his belief that the Bible offered clear sanction for RWDSU’s fight. On-the-ground reporting underscored that organizing meetings began with prayer, and that an instinctively pro-labor faith steeled many of those who participated in the campaign. In longer historical perspective, none of this is surprising. From the beginning, many workers who powered the labor movement did so with the confidence that Jesus, a lowly carpenter, had their backs.

Christian *institutions* have not been so sure. The churches were unrelentingly hostile to unions until, in the early 20th century, working-class believers broke through in a tenacious, decades-long fight to change the clergy’s mind. Thanks to their efforts many major denominations have pro-labor statements. But social teachings do little good if they just accumulate dust on shelves at denominational headquarters. From time to time, churches need to be held accountable to the truths they have already professed.

If what happened at Bessemer is any

indication, the time for such accountability is now. What was missing in all the media coverage of the unionization drive were the names of local clergy and churches standing in solidarity. Several nationally recognized experts on labor organizing cited the absence of overt support from churches in Bessemer as a key factor in the campaign’s failure.

Absence of overt church support is not unique to Bessemer. When was the last time your pastor or priest preached about the importance of unions or, better yet, in a throwback to an older tradition, turned the pulpit over for a day to a unionized worker? How many churches in your community are routinely active in labor struggles? Unions have long dealt with stiff headwinds in the legal and policy realms. Anemic support from local churches is yet another major drag on the movement’s momentum.

But there are reasons to wonder if congregations’ reluctance to join the fight hurts them too—and not just in a moral sense. We live during a time of historic drops in rates of church membership and religious affiliation. The declines are most pronounced among millennials and Generation Z. These are the very same people who are more likely to be skeptical of free markets and even capitalism itself.

Church leaders who look anxiously toward the future might consider deepening their institutional commitment to the contemporary fight for living wages and just working conditions. It would be a stirring witness. But it might also get the attention of many who have not darkened a church door in recent years.

What happened in Bessemer is not the end of the story. There is still power in a union—power for church and labor alike. ✱

**THERE IS STILL
POWER IN A UNION—
FOR CHURCH AND
LABOR ALIKE.**

Heath W. Carter is an associate professor of American Christianity at Princeton Theological Seminary and the author of *Union Made: Working People and the Rise of Social Christianity in Chicago*.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF TERROR

3



When I was 8 years old, in June 1998, three white supremacists lynched James Byrd Jr., a Black man in Jasper, Texas. After offering him a ride in their truck, they beat him, desecrated him, chained him to their vehicle, dragged him to his dismemberment and eventual death, and deposited parts of his body in front of a Black church to be found on Sunday morning. I remember hearing about the murder on the evening news and having a newly personal sense of the geography of racial terror. As a child living in California, I could not locate Jasper on a map, but its name, and Byrd's, were forever fixed in my mind.

Earlier this year, I realized that my great-grandmother was around that same age when, in May 1918, white supremacists lynched Mary Turner and a dozen other Black people, including the baby they cut out of Turner's abdomen. I wonder if my great-grandmother, as a child, heard the news, and how it affected her. In her case, the lynchings happened not three states but three hours from where she lived in Georgia. Unlike in Byrd's case, there were no charges, arrests, trials, or convictions of the known and suspected murderers behind these lynchings. I wonder if and how the killings—and the impunity allowing the lynchers freedom of movement—shaped her sense of the landscape.

In *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*, geographer Katherine McKittrick writes that “Black matters are spatial matters.” McKittrick identifies the social production of space—how landscape is not a fixed background but is defined by relationships. Fugitivity, precarity, and possibilities of life and death are mapped realities that follow social relationships.

Reflecting on this insight, I think of the current pandemic's maps of infection, death, and vaccine access, which reveal the racial coor-

dinates structuring public health: Poor Black and brown communities are hardest hit, while wealthy, white communities receive vaccines the quickest. I also think of Black people's past and present spatial contestations of racial terror. During the so-called “nadir” of Black life in the decades following Reconstruction, when the federal government abandoned Black people to white terrorism, Black women organized. Activists such as Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell remapped space. They built communal infrastructure, claimed civic presence, and challenged annihilative horizons for Black life. Today, Black communities continue their legacy. Through ongoing public protest, we refuse racist geographies of surveillance, containment, and policing—landscapes that feature threat as a natural component of the terrain for women, children, and men of color.

Matthew 25's parable of 10 virgins and their oil lamps is often interpreted with an anticipatory framework looking to the end times. However, I read Jesus' concluding admonition as a directive for the present: “keep watch,” i.e., stay woke. Be awake. Wakefulness—knowledge of where and when you are—is key, not simply to future liberation but to survival in the here-and-now. Future change begins with present navigation as we work to trace a new geography. ✕

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A MAD AND DANGEROUS SPELL

Too much of evangelicalism has, for too long, been hostile to too much of science—that's a given, since opposition to evolution was in some ways the 20th-century coming-out party for a certain kind of fundamentalist Christianity. But that kind of militant ignorance didn't do much practical damage; it was mostly an attack on the sheer beauty of the actual world God has created, one with its infinite, changing variety of life.

The 21st-century attacks on science are more dangerous, highlighted at the moment by the widespread refusal of white evangelicals to be vaccinated against the coronavirus. Despite valiant efforts by some evangelicals to fight back—Francis Collins at the National Institutes of Health being so often a good example—45 percent of white evangelicals said this spring that they didn't plan to get the shot, compared with a quarter of the population at large.

Pressed by reporters, various evangelicals provided various reasons, but many of them sounded kind of the same. According to *The New York Times*:

Nathan French, who leads a nondenominational ministry in Tacoma, Wash., said he received a divine message that

God was the ultimate healer and deliverer: "The vaccine is not the savior." Lauri Armstrong, a Bible-believing nutritionist outside of Dallas, said she did not need the vaccine because God designed the body to heal itself, if given the right nutrients. More than that, she said, "It would be God's will if I am here or if I am not here."

These sentiments sound pious, but they're in fact the opposite—individualism masquerading as faith. God gave us a world that works in certain physical ways, and God gave us the brains to understand it. Scientists have done so—in this case, in short order, they've provided us with a vaccine that prevents a disease that disproportionately threatens people who are elderly, ill, or live in poverty. All we have to do is take the time to get a prick in the arm, and run the infinitesimally tiny risk that goes with any inoculation.

Those refusing the vaccine are precisely the same people who are most likely to reject the need to act on climate change. Just 24 percent of white evangelical Protestants believe that human action is driving the warming of the earth, which doubtless is one reason they voted in such overwhelming numbers for a president who assured them that wind turbines cause cancer. As a result, we have wasted many years when we should have been grappling with the deepest crisis humans have ever faced.

The practical problems with this stance are overwhelming, obviously, but the theological ones are devastating too. We're told on the first page of the Good Book to take care of the earth, and now we're despoiling it; we're told in the gospels that our job is to love our neighbors, and now we're drowning them. It's a great sad irony of our moment that Christianity—white Protestant Christianity, especially its evangelical variants—has become a potent tool for dismantling creation and spreading disease. One prays—constantly—that this mad spell will finally break. ✱

**THOSE REFUSING THE
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CHANGE.**

Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org, is the author most recently of *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?*

4



**"ASIANS ARE NOT
VIRUSES OR
SCAPEGOATS OF
ANGER AND RAGE."**

A PANDEMIC OF VIOLENCE

“When the pandemic began, it didn’t take long for the anti-Asian violence to begin. The violence of calling the virus ‘China virus’ and ‘kung flu’ by the highest political office holder of this nation only helped stoke the fire and put fuel on the hatred against Asians.

I have been called racist epithets many times before. I have been told to go back home many times before. But never have I felt fearful for my life as I have during this pandemic of hatred and violence against Asians. While the overall crime rate has declined from 2019 to 2020, hate crimes against Asians have increased nearly 150 percent in [16] major U.S. cities—and 68 percent of the victims have been Asian women.

This has to stop.

Asians are not viruses or scapegoats of anger and rage. Asians are janitors, restaurant workers, grocery workers, taxi drivers, the police, military members, teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, congressional representatives, and yes, even ordained ministers in the church. We are not expendable strangers of this land.

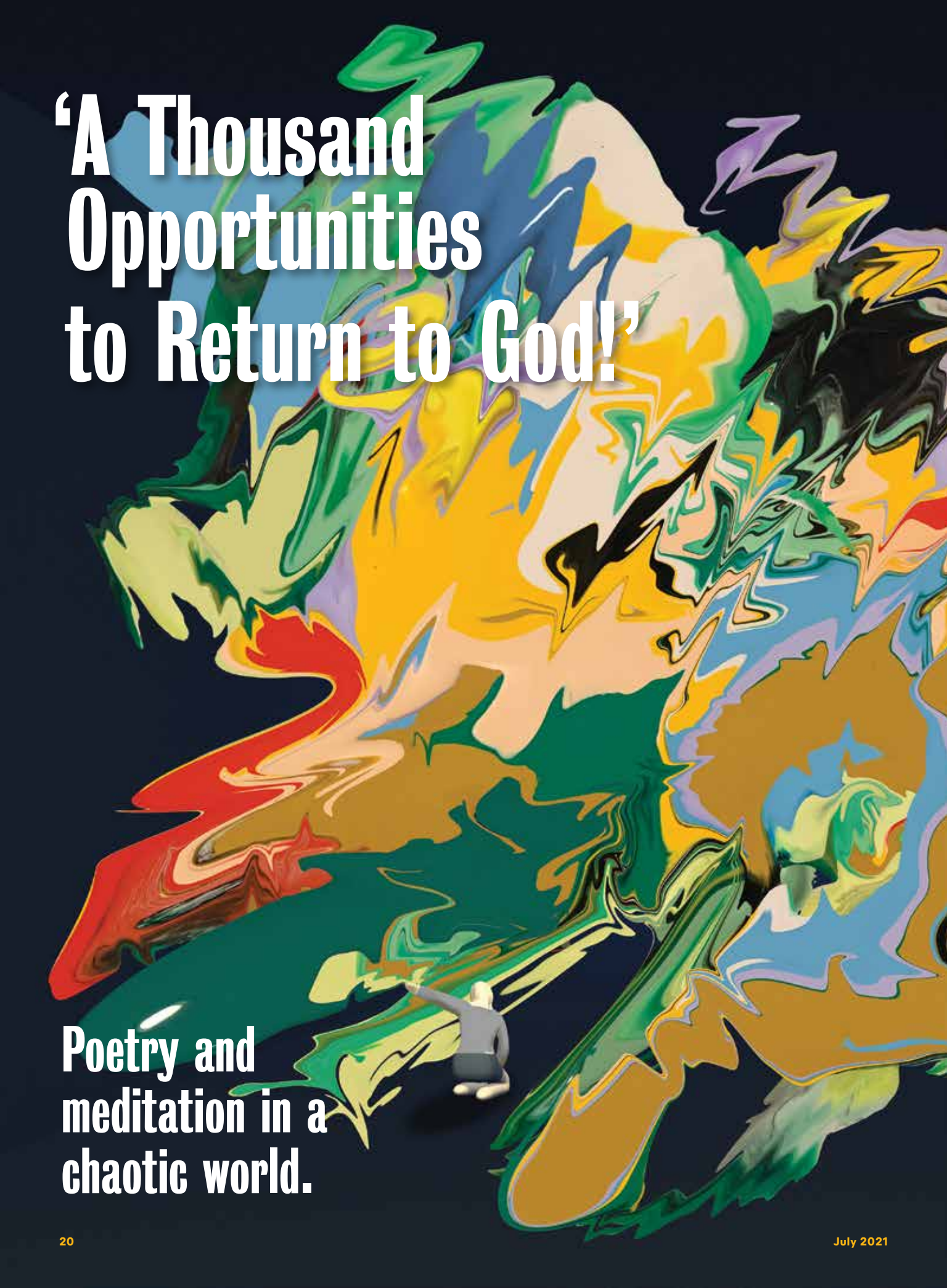
Jesus did not say, ‘hate and kill those who do not look like you.’ Jesus did not say, ‘hate and kill those who disagree with you.’ Jesus said, ‘love your neighbors as yourselves.’ So, I ask you to stand in solidarity with your Asian brothers and sisters in your communities.

Despite the fear and anxiety, the one thing I’ve learned during this pandemic is the value of life, and not to take it for granted. I refuse to let fear take over my life. I refuse to let hatred destroy my faith in the goodness of humanity.”✿

Rt. Rev. Allen K. Shin is the bishop suffragan for the Episcopal Diocese of New York. This excerpt is from a speech Shin delivered in New York City on March 23 following the killing of eight people, six of them women of Asian ancestry, in Atlanta.



‘A Thousand Opportunities to Return to God!’

The background is a vibrant, abstract composition of swirling colors including green, yellow, orange, red, blue, and purple. The colors are blended in a way that suggests movement and depth. In the lower center, a small, dark silhouette of a person is shown from behind, standing on a dark, flat surface and looking up towards the colorful, swirling mass above them. The overall effect is one of looking up at a vast, complex, and colorful world.

**Poetry and
meditation in a
chaotic world.**

A vibrant, abstract illustration by Jon Han. The composition is a dense, swirling mass of organic, liquid-like shapes in a wide array of colors including deep blues, bright yellows, fiery oranges, lush greens, and rich reds. The forms are fluid and interconnected, creating a sense of movement and depth. The background is a solid, dark navy blue, which makes the colorful elements stand out. The overall effect is one of intense energy and complex visual texture.

By Julia
Alvarez

Illustrations by
Jon Han



Often, with meditation, I'm reminded of many people's reaction to poetry. "I don't get it," they say, a little embarrassed to be admitting this to a writer and a former English teacher.

The first thing I think is: You must have had a really lousy teacher who taught you that poetry is something you "get"—a message you extract for a good grade. Poetry-phobes might feel a bit more relaxed when I tell them that's not how poetry works. Often, with my favorite poems, I never fully get them. All I know is that reading and rereading them, the mystery stirs inside me again. In her lovely poem "Self-Portrait with Religion and Poetry," Kate Daniels describes what happens to her when she deeply connects with a work of art:

**... I lie down in the silence
of my mind and touch the world all over.
Clouds fly through me. Trees break the sky
above a frozen lake, and a footprint
startles its crust of snow.**

**Then I can type another page, or nurse
my hungry infant. I can take from the cupboard
the bread and the wine, the eggplant and garlic
my hands will transform into sustenance.**

Like poetry-phobes, I'm a bit of a meditation-phobe. Even after years of daily practice, I feel like a total failure. Within seconds of hearing the bell, my mind is overrun by thoughts, plans, insights, schedules, shopping lists (eggplant, garlic, bread, wine).

I recently heard a story that has helped me relax about my meditation practice. An elderly nun attended a retreat on centering prayer (the Christian term for meditation). After two days, she tearfully confessed

that her mind must have strayed a thousand times. The meditation leader beamed. "Wonderful! A thousand opportunities to return to God!"

Hearing that story, I was reminded of the parable of the prodigal son and the joy the father experiences when the young man returns home. Now multiply that by a thousand times—that's a lot of joy!

Another helpful tip for wayward meditators (is there any other kind?) is to imagine yourself as an old grandmother or grandfather minding the grandkids and their little friends. They run around like crazy, jumping, laughing, falling down, bawling, fighting, hugging each other. Oh my, such exuberance! You're exhausted just watching them. But your part is not to throw yourself into that fray. You've gone past that stage of life. They are doing what children do. And you are doing what old, tired souls do: watching, stepping in if needed, mostly just being a kind, attentive, and nonjudgmental presence in their world.

So also when you meditate. You are minding that noisy gaggle running around in your head. Not getting pulled into their arguments, siding with their alliances, indulging their tantrums. That's all you have to "do," all you have to "get" about meditation.

You don't even have to be good at it. Grandma sometimes nods off. Some days she's cranky or impatient. But her bedrock love for these little critters comes through even on those bad gray-hair days. "You do not have to be good," Mary Oliver reminds us in her poem, "Wild Geese." It's as simple as letting "the soft animal of your body/love what it loves."

A young friend recently told me he has the best grandmother in the world. Thinking I'd get some tips on being a terrific grandmother too (There I go again!), I asked what made her the best. His ready answer, "She always says yes."

That's a great approach to meditating, and to life in general, if we understand our lives as an extended meditation practice and ongoing prayer. Rumi, the 13th century Persian poet and mystic, reminds us of this in his poem "The Guest House" (translated by Coleman Barks):

**This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.**



**A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.**

**Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.**

**The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.**

**Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.**

This isn't always possible, I know. I confess I often say *No*! I don't have the energy, I'm busy writing; I'm resting; I already gave to the last uninvited guest; it's not a convenient time. (The much longer version of this list is available in my meditating mind.) But what I've found is that resisting takes up a heck of a lot more time, energy, good will, and peace of mind than letting the unwelcomed feelings, thoughts, and distractions come and go. It turns out they aren't all that interested in me. Don't take your feelings personally, a Quaker in our meditation group advised at one of our sessions.

During a rough period of my life, I kept having a recurrent nightmare. A monster was chasing after me. Breathless and panicked, I ran home, locked myself in, and piled every available piece of furniture at the door. Finally, the monster took the hint and wandered off.

Or so I thought. But when I turned around, relieved, there it was: It wasn't a monster, but a mirror, reflecting my face.

As with poetry and meditation, I'm not sure I totally "get" my dreams. But I get the hint: Acceptance changes the paradigm, defuses the struggle, humanizes the fear. Ruby Sales, the African American activist and founder of SpiritHouse Project, once remarked that when she finds herself in a furious, escalating encounter where sides are being taken and folks are demonizing, "us"-ing and "them"-ing each other, her first question is, "Where does it hurt?" It doesn't end the struggle, but it begins to transform it. The no and the yes can reach a further shore, a larger paradigm. History and hope sometimes do rhyme. And—to bring in yet another poet, William Blake—both wear the human face divine.

So, feel encouraged. Welcome whatever comes to the doors of your attention when you meditate. No need to give up, abandon the house or put up a struggle or call the superego cops. Finally, these distractions are guests, not permanent residents. (At the end of their play day, the grandkids go home.) These visitors might just be clearing space for the mystery already stirring inside you. ✕

Julia Alvarez is the author of many books, including *Afterlife*, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, and a picture book for young readers, *Already a Butterfly: A Meditation Story*. Thank you to Kate Daniels and Coleman Barks for permission to quote their work.



THE DRE LIV 0

HOW TO GIVE AWAY YOUR CHURCH—
AND FIGHT GENTRIFICATION AT THE SAME TIME.

THE TEAM VES N

BY AMANDA HURON
PHOTOGRAPHS BY NATE PALMER

WHEN URBAN CHURCHES DISBAND,

congregations face decisions about what to do with their property. In cities with hot real estate markets, church buildings are often sold off and redeveloped as condominiums or for other profitable uses. But the logic of the market need not guide all such decisions.

In 2016, the Community of Christ, a small church in central Washington, D.C., gave away the building it had owned for more than 40 years, a property worth more than \$1 million. During the process of disbanding, the church members had decided that they wanted to pass their building on to an organization doing socially meaningful work in the neighborhood. Their story demonstrates ways of thinking about property as a spiritual and collective resource—and how to put those ideals into action.

The Community of Christ was formed in 1965 in Washington's Dupont Circle neighborhood. Although founded by Lutherans, it was from the beginning an ecumenical church. And like several other congregations forming in D.C. around the same time, the community was an experiment in church: dedicated to social justice and to doing God's work in the neighborhood, including building relationships with their neighbors. In 1973, the group purchased an 11-room storefront building in the nearby Mt. Pleasant neighborhood, a diverse and relatively affordable area where a number of church members had already moved, and began worshipping in that space. Shortly thereafter, the Community of Christ became a lay-led, shared-leadership congregation, with no single minister and no paid staff. All activities of the church—both spiritual and logistical—were from then on carried out on a volunteer basis by mem-

bers, and all major decisions were made by consensus.

Part of their spiritual work was to make their building, which was known as “La Casa,” radically open to the neighborhood. La Casa became a place that enabled many people—church members, and also people throughout the neighborhood—to answer a call or fulfill a dream. One church member ran a school for adults with developmental disabilities in La Casa for many years. A toy lending library was housed in the space. A string of small shops operated in the ground-floor storefront rooms, tiny non-profits rented office space, countless groups held meetings, and benefit concerts raised money for local causes. La Casa hosted the monthly meetings of the neighborhood's elected advisory commission. It hosted a support group for Latina women who experienced domestic violence, meeting space for day laborer organizers, a fair trade shop, offices for a solar power cooperative, art shows, poetry readings, film screenings, and book talks. For between \$10 and \$25 a night, nearly anyone could rent the main space, where the church worshipped on Sundays, for a meeting or an event of social benefit.

A COMMUNITY HUB

I know all this because when I was a toddler in the early 1970s, my family moved to the neighborhood to be part of the Community of Christ. I grew up in La Casa, where I spent nearly every Sunday of my childhood singing hymns during the services and eating donuts from nearby Heller's Bakery with everyone afterward. When I was older, my band practiced in the building's basement. I helped put on dozens of punk benefit shows in the space. I worked with others to start a neighborhood radio station that operated out of the building for close to 15 years. La Casa felt like a second home to me—a place I'd lived my most important experiences. And at some point, I became aware that it felt like a second home to scores, perhaps hundreds, of other people too, many or even most of whom I did not know. It was a neighborhood commons: a place that many different people managed to use in many different ways, a wide variety of projects and dreams crisscrossing through the space over time. Sometimes it felt as if half the neighborhood had a key to the building.

But in 2015, 50 years after its founding, the Community of Christ discerned that it was time to end the ministry and formal life together. Its membership, never large,



was dwindling. A few key old-timers had moved away, and a few others had died. After months of discussion, prayer, and reflection, members came to the decision to formally dissolve the church. The next question was what to do with La Casa. The congregation did what they had always done when they needed to figure out a problem: They formed a committee. The six church members called themselves the Future of La Casa Committee, and their mission was to work by consensus to arrive at a recommendation of what to do with the building.

At the outset, the committee decided that they would like to give the building to a local group that could pay off the small remaining mortgage and make good use of the space into the future. The congregation as a whole agreed upon a set of four principles regarding their future vision for La Casa. First, the new owner should be a strong, stable church or other nonprofit



with the financial and managerial capacity and long-term commitment to utilize and operate the building effectively for good. Second, the building should continue to be available for use by the community at large after the transfer of ownership. Third, the current tenants should have the right to stay for an agreed-upon period of time after the building was transferred to new owners. Finally, the Community of Christ should have the right to continue to use the building for limited purposes for as long as needed.

The committee spent quite some time discussing the second principle. This, they recognized, was an unusual request: One of the key rights of private property ownership is the ability to exclude others from your property. Yet it was because the church had kept La Casa open to so many people and groups over the decades that it had become such a vital center for all kinds of community. They wanted to see

“THE PROCESS OF GIVING AWAY LA CASA WAS BOTH HIGHLY LOGICAL AND DEEPLY MYSTICAL.”

this spirit of openness continue under the next owners. Ultimately, they decided not to write this requirement into the covenant on the building, in part because it would be nearly impossible to enforce. Instead, they strove to select a new owner that would be committed to seeing the building as something of a collective resource. This was particularly important given the lack of affordable space for meetings and community events in an increasingly high-rent neighborhood.

The church knew that they were in the strange position of trying to figure out how to give away a valuable piece of real estate in the midst of a hyper-gentrifying city, where affordable space was at a premium. A 2019 study concluded that Washington, D.C., had the highest “intensity” gentrification of any city in the U.S.—and gentrification had been underway in the city, and in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood, for years.

How do you thoughtfully transfer a piece of property that holds so much meaning to so many people in the context of such pressure? How do you avoid a feeding frenzy of groups desperate for affordable space? The committee did not want to do anything that might ratchet up competition among the potentially interested groups. So they agreed to keep their internal discussions fully confidential. And, though they would operate using a consensus model, they wanted to get it done in a timely manner: They began their work in 2015, with the goal of formally transferring ownership before the end of 2016. If they could not identify a new owner that fit their four main principles, the backup plan was to sell the building at fair market value, without any preconditions, to a nonprofit or a progressive for-profit company—but they were hopeful they would not have to go this route.

With their guiding principles established, the committee was ready to move forward. First, in fall 2015, they reached out to the Metro D.C. Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), with which the Community of Christ was affiliated. The synod staff worked with the committee to see if any local ELCA congregations were interested in taking



**“THE GIFT OF
THE BUILDING HAD
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TO MAKE CREATIVE
USE OF THE SPACE.”**

ownership of La Casa for church ministries. Over five months of exploratory meetings, it became clear that the three local ELCA congregations did not have the desire or the capacity to utilize La Casa.

The committee then created a formal Notice of Invitation for Proposals (NIP) for other potentially interested groups. In April 2016, they sent the notice to about 20 groups with which the church had a longstanding relationship—including the building’s current tenants, groups that had used the building over the years, and organizations to which the church had historically given benevolences. They also created a way for other groups to submit a letter of interest and then be approved to submit a proposal.

A committee-hosted information session later in April for the groups that received the NIP drew much interest—

about 30 or 40 people attended. Ultimately, only six groups submitted proposals. The committee created an online tool to review them, and then met over two days to evaluate the proposals together. They requested additional information from three applicants, and then met with applicants to get a better sense of how they planned to use the building. The committee wrestled with their final decision. In a July 2016 report to the full church, they noted that all six proposals were strong, the decision making was difficult, and at various times throughout the process all six organizations had the equal potential to be chosen.

PASSING ON THE GIFT

Ultimately, the committee decided to recommend that the Community of Christ transfer La Casa to La Clínica del Pueblo, an organization based nearby in the Columbia Heights neighborhood. La Clínica was founded in 1983 to provide health care to the rapidly growing Latino immigrant community. More recently it had been ramping up its organizing and health education efforts among immigrants and was proposing to use La Casa as the base for this work. The church had long supported La Clínica’s mission, and the committee thought they would be good stewards of the building.

The Community of Christ accepted the committee’s recommendation, and in July 2016, La Clínica was notified that it had been selected. There was a joyful coincidence here, embodied in the person of Sally Hanlon. Hanlon was a longstanding member of the Community of Christ, a former nun who dedicated her life to doing God’s work in the world, much of which involved bearing witness to atrocities in Central America. She had also volunteered as an interpreter at La Clínica del Pueblo for years. Though this connection did not impact the committee’s decision to choose La Clínica, that relationship did feel like an affirmation.

On Dec. 10, 2016, the Community of Christ formally transferred ownership of La Casa to La Clínica del Pueblo in a bilingual ceremony inside La Casa. Dec. 10 is International Human Rights Day, a fitting time to make the gift to a group dedicated to organizing for the health and human rights of people often forced to the margins of society. The place was packed. Representatives from the Community of Christ and La Clínica del Pueblo spoke movingly of their hopes for La Casa’s future. Women from La



Clínica's domestic violence support group shared their plans for using the space. We all sang. There were tears of joy and gratitude, and also some of sorrow and loss. Afterward, we shared a meal, in La Clínica's tradition of a desayuno ecumenical, or ecumenical breakfast, a multifaith meal designed to foster community. We lingered in the building's central common space, chatting. And finally, it was complete.

NEW DREAMS AND VISIONS

Three years later, I visited La Casa to talk with La Clínica del Pueblo staff about how they were using the space. The building was buzzing with activity. People chatted and hung out in the welcoming open office of La Clínica's support group for LGBTQ Latinos. Several adjoining tiny rooms enabled private counseling sessions. Women were at work in the office space for the domestic violence support group. La Clínica's health promoters, who were based in La Casa but did most of their work in the surrounding community, came and went. Young people were gathered in the office of a language-access organizing group that had rented space in La Casa for years and had remained as tenants when La Clínica took ownership.

La Casa, staff told me, was a place for people to feel safe, to feel at home. The gift of the building, they said, had inspired them to make creative use of the space. They took seriously the commitment to keeping the building open for the broader community: Hanging in the entrance way was a framed declaration of their intent to maintain the space as a community resource. They have many plans for the future, including turning an outdoor area behind La Casa into a patio

for socializing and using the building as an incubator space for new community projects. Undergirding all this work is the principle that health is about more than going to the doctor: Health is also mental, emotional, and spiritual and is best advanced through a holistic approach that encourages community connection.

The process of giving away La Casa was both highly logical and deeply mystical. It was based in a set of clearly stated principles; it was organized, with a clear timetable; and the Future of La Casa committee made every effort to be fair and confidential. And the process was fundamentally rooted in a spiritual vision: The committee began and ended their meetings with prayer, asking for God's guidance, and they paid close attention to how the Spirit moved through their discussions. Importantly, this all was undertaken by people who had worked, worshipped, and communed together for decades: They trusted each other, they trusted the process, and they sought input from the wider community at key points.

The vision underlying the decision to

use the building to advance social justice, not for profit, was rooted in how church members had long understood their ministry in their neighborhood and the city. As one committee member wrote, "It was almost in our dying that we became even more clear about the 'why' behind our spiritual life together and our desire for our ministries to live on in some core way in ... the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood and D.C." The spirit of a church that was founded as a place-based ministry continues to reverberate even after it has been formally dissolved.

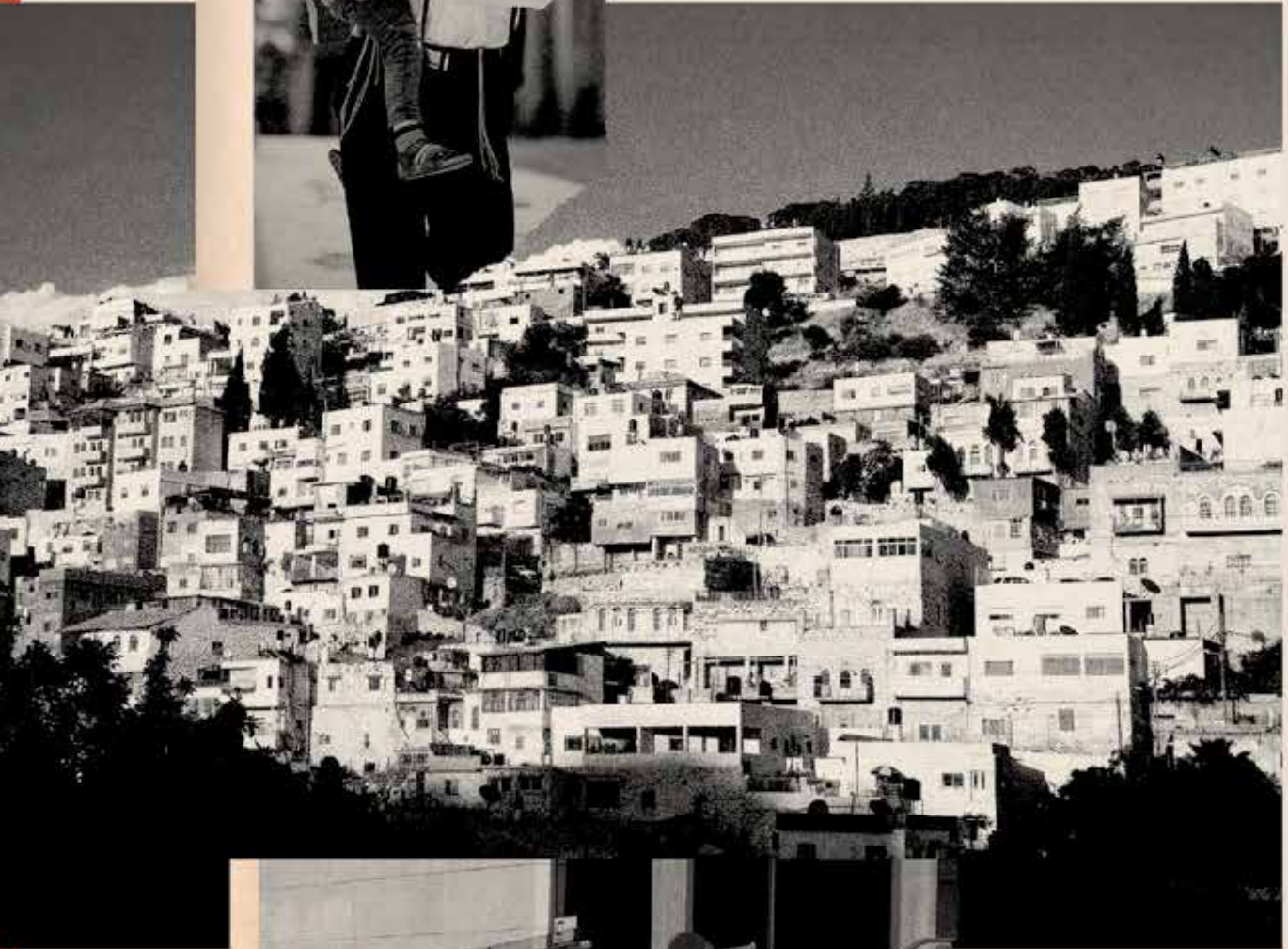
What the Community of Christ did with La Casa may not work for all churches that are closing their doors. But it may be a guide for some: a way to think about property that can help others answer a call and pursue a dream. ✦

Amanda Huron, an associate professor at the University of the District of Columbia, teaches courses in digital mapping, the politics of housing, and the history of Washington, D.C. This article is dedicated to the memory of Bob Pohlman.

THE ROOTS OF WAR



**ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS HAVE MADE
A TWO-STATE SOLUTION IMPOSSIBLE.
WHAT'S NEXT FOR PALESTINE/ISRAEL?**



**BY JONATHAN
KUTTAB**

**ILLUSTRATIONS
BY MARK HARRIS**

The Israeli victory in the 1967 war created a new reality in the region. Gradually, the outlines of a possible Grand Compromise began to take shape: Israel would return the land it captured in that war and in return the Palestinians and the Arab world would acknowledge Israel's sovereignty over the 78 percent of Palestine that constituted the state of Israel on the eve of that war. This Grand Compromise, often referred to as "Land for Peace," was enshrined in U.N. Resolution 242, and it gradually obtained the support of solid majorities among Palestinians and Arabs as well as Israelis and their supporters abroad. The two-state solution became the acknowledged goal for all well-meaning people as the ideal formula for a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Those who rejected it from either side were viewed as maximalist hardliners and enemies to peace.

But as soon as the guns were silent in 1967, the issue of Jewish settlements in the newly occupied territories became a central and defining feature of the conflict between Zionism and Palestinian nationalism. International law allowed neither annexation nor the demographic shifts required to fulfill the Zionist ideal in terms of ejecting the non-Jewish population and moving Jews into the newly occupied territories. All such Zionist activity, therefore, needed to be carefully camouflaged and justified in secular, non-Zionist terms. It had to be justified either as a security measure, a temporary arrangement, or the creation of bargaining chips for the peace negotiations that were to come.

Palestinians who happened to be out of the area at the end of the war, or who left because of the war, were promptly blocked from returning. Israel started taking property all over the West Bank and Gaza under a variety of excuses and legal machinations and making that land available for Jewish settlers. Jewish settlers started moving in and creating exclusive Jewish enclaves that gave every indication of permanence. It is noteworthy that these settlements were not Israeli per se (Israeli Arab citizens were barred from them) but specifically and exclusively Jewish.

The settlements totally, fully, and radically contradicted and undermined the possibility of a two-state solution. Any credible two-state solution required an "Arab" Palestine in 22 percent of historic Palestine, in return for abandoning Palestinian claims in Israel as it existed before the 1967 war. In this sense, settlements became the primary impediments for a two-state solution, and

those dedicated to it necessarily saw the settlers as the spoilers of any possibility of implementing the Grand Compromise.

FACTS ON THE GROUND

From the beginning, the goal of the settlement enterprise was to create "facts on the ground" that would be difficult, if not impossible, to change later. For example, some of the most immediate activities in the settlement realm were started as early as 1967 and centered on East Jerusalem. The entire Moghrabi Quarter in the Old City was razed to create a plaza in front of the Western Wall, and two rings of residential high-rise settlements were created in East Jerusalem, cutting it off from the rest of the West Bank. This policy eventually led to introducing enough Jews into the expanded East Jerusalem to create a Jewish majority there, thus making East Jerusalem a permanent part of the state of Israel.

Additional activities were undertaken in the rest of the occupied territories to create Jewish settlements there, complete with their own infrastructure and even a separate road system connecting them with each other and with Israel. These activities were in line with Zionist ideology that would eventually create irreversible new facts on the ground and preclude a two-state solution. Now, more than 50 years after the 1967 war, the "facts on the ground" have reached a level of solidity and permanence that makes them impossible to reverse.

Today there are more than 700,000 Jewish settlers who have moved into the occupied territories and made their homes there. They live in coherent communities, with homes, playgrounds, gardens, graveyards, swimming pools, neighbors, schools, a university, infrastructure, and all the fabric of civilian life. They are "at home" there as much as any Jewish Israeli is within the Green Line (the 1967 border). To even contemplate uprooting them at this time is to contemplate a major emotional and humanitarian disaster of monumental proportions. It is true that their presence was illegal in the first place and that they are actually living on stolen property. It is also true that the very structure of their communities is racist, discriminatory, and exclusivist, being closed to non-Jewish Israeli citizens. Furthermore, there is an international consensus on the illegality of these settlements.

However, all these factors are beside the point. To uproot them now would be so disruptive of the lives of the settlers, their children, and the entire fabric of Jewish

Israeli society that it is difficult to contemplate. If an Israeli government were to attempt it, the effect would be so disruptive that it might well plunge the country into civil war. Even if such an outcome could be obtained by bribery (compensation), fear, or compulsion, there is no question as to its enormous cost in human terms alone, and that the political will to do it is beyond the capability of any Israeli government. The fact that tens of thousands of these settlers are also fundamentalists who have dedicated their lives to the settlement enterprise will further ensure that removing them could not be accomplished without the risk of starting a civil war. Settlers today constitute about 10 percent of the Jewish population of Israel, and they are well organized to resist any attempt to remove them.

In certain cases, the declared intent of the government was to locate some settlements in such a manner as to block the possibility of a future Palestinian state. At other times, the Israeli government would insist that such offending settlements were not authorized or legitimate and would be removed in an eventual peace agreement. Regardless, the result is that the location of settlements has become a factor that makes it impossible to establish a coherent and contiguous Palestinian state in the West Bank.

No one in Israel today seriously contemplates any substantial uprooting or removal of settlers in the West Bank. This means that the basic premise of the two-state solution cannot possibly be realized since a Palestinian state cannot exist without massive removal of Jewish settlers and dismantlement of a large number, if not all, of the settlements.

It has been argued that the bulk of the settlements (the settlement blocks) can be allowed to remain and annexed to Israel through an agreement for land swaps, whereby Israel would grant a new Palestinian state equivalent land from Israel itself. However, even under the most optimistic scenarios, at least 100,000 settlers would still have to be removed to provide any serious coherent contiguous territory to such a state. This is not a realistic possibility. The settlements and the settler outposts are so scattered throughout the West Bank, and so firmly rooted in Israeli psychology and political reality, that a contiguous Palestinian state is no longer physically possible.

But if that is the case, what is the alternative? What is the endgame for those on both sides, as well as their supporters outside and the international community itself? Some out-of-the box thinking is required: a new strategy by which we may pursue

peace, justice, some measure of stability, and an end to the conflict. Such new thinking would require a radical reformulation of the language, assumptions, and orientation of people on all sides. How to achieve it is a totally different question.

NEW THINKING IS NECESSARY—ON BOTH SIDES

To think out of the box regarding a future for Israeli Jews and their supporters, and for Palestinian Arabs and their supporters, we must start by acknowledging that the ideologies of the two protagonists are basically incompatible: One ideology wanted to have a Jewish state in the land (whether by divine right, or historical connection, or existential need) which serves the interest of all Jews worldwide and is dedicated exclusively to their interests. This necessarily requires the elimination or subjugation and repression of the indigenous non-Jewish population. On the other hand, a different ideology insists on an Arab Palestine as part of the Arab world and treats all Jews—other than the original Palestinian Jews—as foreign invaders with no rights and connection to the land. Such an ideology logically requires the elimination or forced expulsion of most Israelis as recent immigrants and a denial of the Jewish religious and cultural aspirations and requirements.

New thinking, beyond the two-state solution, would require each group to sufficiently empathize with and understand the hopes, fears, interests, and aspirations of the other group. It would lead each group to sufficiently moderate and otherwise change its own ideology to accommodate the other group rather than vanquish and dominate it and deny it any legitimacy.

To achieve this outcome, we need to ask Zionists, “What is it that you really want? What are your rock bottom needs, and can those needs be accommodated in Palestine/Israel without thoroughly negating the interests and reality of the Palestinians?” We also need to ask the Palestinians, “What is it that you really want? What are your rock bottom needs, and can these needs be accomplished in a state where you are not dominant and where Israeli Jews are roughly equal in number to the Palestinian Arabs?”

Implicit in both questions is a belief that while an electoral democracy requires one-person, one-vote, a state that belongs to more than one major ethnic/religious group cannot afford to ignore the other. It must find a formula that accommodates all

people and contains sufficient iron-clad legal and institutional guarantees to protect each group, particularly the minority against the caprice of the majority. This is especially true where historic differences and recent enmities shape present realities. New structures must be created, and iron-clad guarantees must be firmly established in constitutions and laws that cannot be altered or overturned by numerical majorities, or that require a supermajority of more than one house of representatives, so as to prevent them from being derailed by the group with a numerical majority.

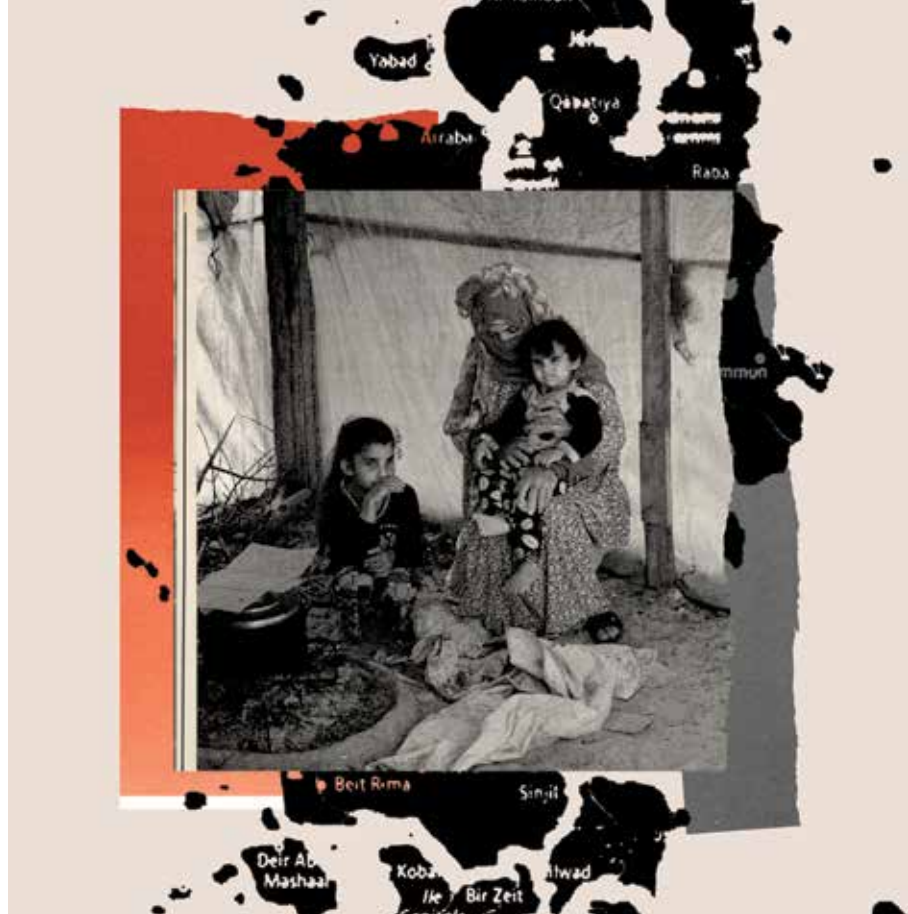
In our situation, the system requires—in addition to internal legal and other controls—a high level of international support, guarantees, and legitimacy in light of the extensive interest of and involvement of significant outside actors. Specifically, the religious importance of the land—and particularly Jerusalem—to all three monotheistic religions gives the international community a significant stake. It is of interest to ensure the governance of the whole country in a manner that guarantees

open access to it, and nonexclusive control over its destiny. Jewish or Muslim claims of exclusivity cannot be tolerated; thank God, since the times of the Crusaders, Christians have ceased to make such exclusive religious claims.

For a solution to commend itself to people of goodwill on both sides, and significant third parties as well, it must address the major needs of each community. These needs should be identified by each side as bottom-line irreducible requirements, as opposed to desired or demanded outcomes. These needs must be met and addressed by the new order regardless of whether either group is in the numeric majority or minority now or in the future.

Jonathan Kuttub is a Palestinian Christian, human rights lawyer, and co-founder of Nonviolence International. This article is adapted with permission from his book *Beyond the Two-State Solution* (available from Nonviolence International.net/Beyond2States).

“A CONTIGUOUS PALESTINIAN STATE IS NO LONGER PHYSICALLY POSSIBLE.”



IMAGINING OTHER POSSIBILITIES

THE UNTENABILITY OF THE TWO-STATE PARADIGM NECESSITATES A SHIFT IN OUR THINKING.

■ BY ORIEL EISNER

Jonathan Kuttab's *Beyond the Two-State Solution* is an important, clear-eyed contribution to the conversation about the future of Israel-Palestine. Kuttab directly and with a forgiving spirit addresses what is at stake, making clear why thinking beyond the two-state solution paradigm is necessary for anyone who seeks a just and equitable path forward in the region.

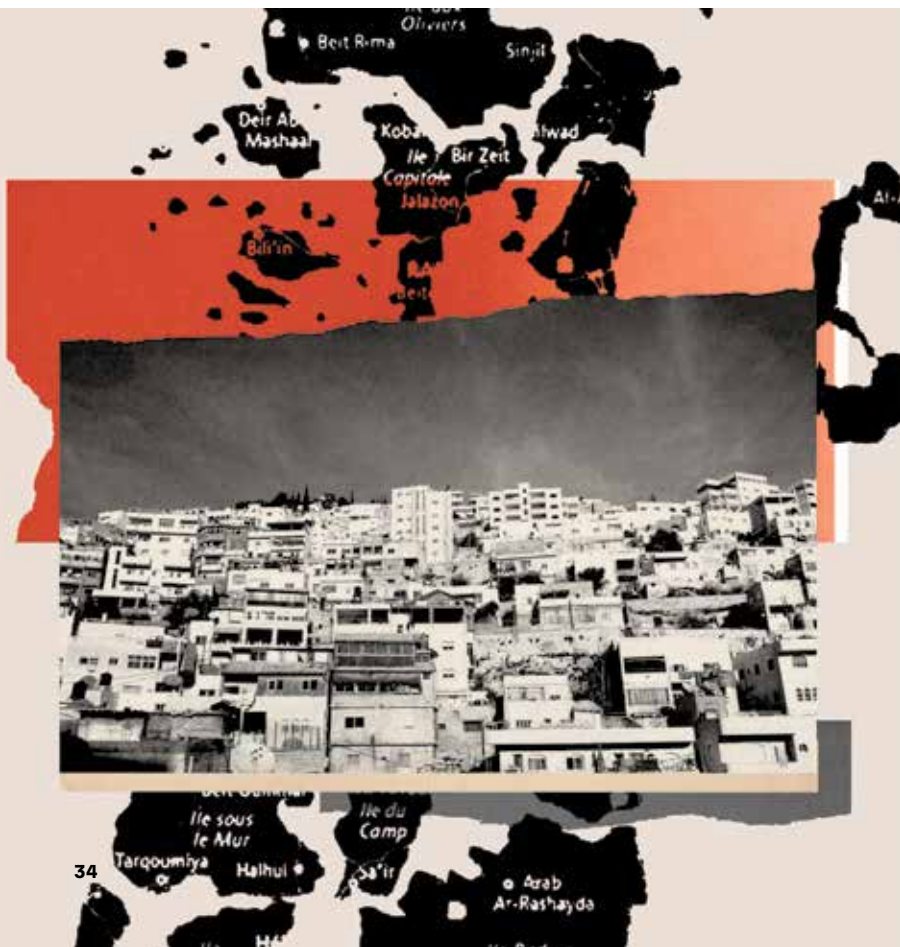
As he writes, the “facts on the ground” are such that the geography of the two-state solution is untenable. He primarily discusses the emotional and social toll of uprooting the settlement enterprise, which is made up of more than 700,000 Jewish settlers living scattered across the West Bank. Israel has been building the infrastructure of a one-state reality for decades now, infrastructure that advances de facto annexation, suburbanizing settlements in the Jewish imagination, and fragmenting huge swaths of Palestinian territory. Jewish Jerusalem and its settlements, roadways, and municipal systems sprawl into the boundaries of Ramallah, Bethlehem, the Jordan Valley, and Palestinian East Jerusalem.

Currently, Israel is working on highway, housing, and water projects that are literally destroying and tunneling through mountains—and communities—in the landscape around Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank. This is not to mention the unending settler encroachment—in the past month alone, there have been four new settler outpost projects just in the South Hebron Hills. These steps are not easily undone, and with each construction project, Israel's pseudo “two-state commitment” becomes more and more deeply embedded in an oppressive and unequal one-state reality.

It is important to articulate that the two-state solution is no longer possible due to facts on the ground, and its failure gives solid justification to why something else is needed. But it is also important to emphasize what has been allowed by the two-state solution paradigm—namely, that stubborn international alignment with this paradigm and Israel's professed support of it has given Israel a pass for the horribly unequal and violent one-state reality that it upholds and propagates. The facts on the ground are not neutral. Each fact, each change in the landscape, is a seizure of land, is a home demolition, is a loss of access to agricultural land and resources. It is a violent incursion on Palestinian livelihood at the hands of the Israeli authorities or at the hands of settlers who act with impunity as emissaries of the state.

The direction forward is quite clear: equality and shared recognition of stakes and needs. The specifics of that endpoint are not made clear, nor do they need to be to shift the dominant thinking. The untenability of the two-state solution paradigm, coupled with how violent and destructive it has been on Palestinian livelihood, is reason enough to start imagining other possibilities. For Israelis as well, maintaining an unjust one-state reality demands an ever-expanding military-industrial complex. This holds the Jewish-Israeli population in a perpetual state of war that recruits all its youth into the fight as well as foment an obsession with security that feeds racism and erodes democracy. Hopefully, Kuttab's thoughtful opening of imaginative possibilities can push the discourse in a more just and peaceful direction. ✧

Oriel Eisner, an American Israeli living in Jerusalem, is co-director of the Center for Jewish Nonviolence.





PARKER MILLSAP'S FOLK MUSIC
CALLED HIM INWARD.
IT'S CALLING US TOO. —————→



That's communing with all of the parts of reality at once."

Though he has sought to experience that communion ever since learning how to play guitar, Millsap seems most connected with his own higher power on his latest album, *Be Here Instead*—his fifth LP in nearly a decade. While the tracks don't appear explicitly about religion or church, it doesn't take long for the listener to hear Millsap preaching, or more likely, praying. He finds a great deal of hope in the hymns he grew up with and did his best to replicate some of that on *Be Here Instead*.

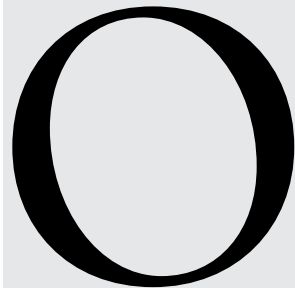
"It was my goal to make these songs feel like hymns," he explains, "to have some secular hymns or prayers that I could say to myself. The working title of the album and the original title for the song 'Vulnerable' was 'Note to Self,' because I really feel like a lot of these songs are things that I needed to write in order to say them to myself."

Just as he sang about filling a page to keep the demons away back in 2012, Millsap continues to find new ways to guard himself through his music. "I just have to let go of as much guilt and anger as I can," he says. "I was young and in the church and didn't know anything else, and then as I became a teenager, I started to discover the world and other religions and things like that. I began to see how the message of Christ had been perverted, and I really turned my back on it for a while. I was angry at the church, I was angry at whatever I thought Jesus was."

Over time Millsap began to shift his perspective. "I don't know how to change these negative dogmatic practices I see all around," Millsap says with a humble yet serious inflection in his voice, "but what I do know is how to reframe things. For me, it's about thinking of Jesus as the radical hippie who said, 'Just think in your head that you're saved and you're saved. You don't have to feel guilt anymore.' I mean, how radical is that?"

Although he doesn't view himself as an active Christian because he doesn't go to church every Sunday, he seems proud to admit that he retains a sense of what he calls "Christ consciousness." "What I mean is that in my deep lizard brain, the models of good and bad behavior are still very

cont'd on page 41



On his debut record, *Pallisade*, released in 2012, Americana wunderkind Parker Millsap ends the title track singing with blues-soaked vocals, "Writing on a blank white page keeps my demons

one more day away." For Millsap, an Oklahoma native who now calls Nashville home, those lyrics weren't just a young artist trying to sound profound; they spoke truth to his experience with music and faith.

"When I'm playing [music] with other people and for other people, there is something about it that will always feel spiritual to me," says Millsap. "After all, that spiritual feeling, that's the context I first received music in."

Millsap grew up in a Pentecostal church in a small Oklahoma town, and says if people were going to speak in tongues or run around the sanctuary, it was almost always during the music. "I always resonated with using music to reach ecstatic states," he says. "As soon as I could play enough chords to keep up, they put me down in front at church."

It wasn't only performing that drew Millsap in; the communal aspect of music was just as important. "I wouldn't be doing this today if it weren't for growing up in that context," he says.

As Millsap grew older and became a stronger guitarist and songwriter, he began to face some difficult realities of what it means to be part of organized religion. But he doesn't dwell on the negative experiences he or his friends have had over the years. "What's great about music is that it can transcend all of the dogmas and all of the rules and all of that," he says. "Whatever God is called—Jesus, God, a collective unconscious, whatever—when you're playing music, that's connecting to God or your higher power.

MILLSAP FINDS A GREAT DEAL OF HOPE IN THE HYMNS HE GREW UP WITH.



SHAPE-SHIFTING SUPREMACISTS

By Abby Olcese

In 2016, Raoul Peck's documentary *I Am Not Your Negro* used the life and work of James Baldwin to explore the underlying truths of racism in U.S. society. Peck said that after making that film, "Baldwin had firebombed every known field of bigotry I knew and annihilated any attempt at deniability of the racist monster that lurks in corners of our societies."

Processing that experience led Peck to his new, ambitious HBO documentary series *Exterminate All the Brutes*. In it, Peck expands on the themes of ignorance and resistance in our modern-day understanding of racism and on how our flawed historical understanding feeds those attitudes. *Exterminate All the Brutes* is also an essay film, with Peck, a Haitian immigrant, reflecting on his identity as a Black man who has lived in a variety of cultures and how that's influenced his own art.

The series weaves voiceover and scripted dramatic scenes with information from groundbreaking works on European colonialism, Indigenous peoples, and racism—including Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past*, and Sven Lindqvist's *Exterminate All the Brutes*.

As with *I Am Not Your Negro*, Peck is interested in how the past informs our present. The results are heartbreaking and eye-opening. In a 2008 speech at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, then-Sen. Barack Obama pointed to slavery as America's original sin. Peck goes further, noting that colonization and the systematic dehumanization of native peoples are what allowed slavery to happen in the first place.

This sentiment echoes throughout *Exterminate All the Brutes*' episodes. The scripted scenes feature, for example, Josh Hartnett playing a white oppressor in a variety of guises. In one, he's a U.S. Army sergeant who massacres a Seminole tribe. In another, a colonizer in then Belgian Congo who kills and mutilates Congolese rubber farmers. Peck positions Hartnett's shape-shifting everyman as the forebear of the white supremacists who terrorized Charlottesville in 2017. It's a useful reminder that no matter what mask it wears, the sin of white supremacy is the same, and its roots run deep.

With *Exterminate All the Brutes*, Peck crams 600 years of history into four hours of television, and in the process makes many of us question everything we've ever learned. These ideas aren't new—Peck acknowledges the work of those who've come before—but the series is a ruthlessly efficient expression of them. It's also a valuable unpacking of how history informs modern identity, directly and indirectly. It's not an easy watch, but it is a necessary one, peeling away every excuse and whitewashed historical tale to lay bare uncomfortable truths at the core of Western civilization. ♦

Abby Olcese (@abbyolcese) is a freelance film critic and writer based in Kansas.

'I FINALLY SEE'

Prerelease tracks "Church Girl" and "Safe Passage" pave the way for British singer-songwriter Laura Mvula's forthcoming album *Pink Noise*. The former gospel choir member brings introspection and the '80s sounds of her youth to her third record, perfect for dancing.

Atlantic Records



A Common Thread

Muslim American Writers at Home: Stories, Essays and Poems of Identity, Diversity and Belonging gathers a range of Muslim identity and experience in the U.S. and Canada. Authors in the anthology share dreams and memories, shatter stereotypes, and speak to one another.

Freedom Voices



'All of My Days'

Late pastor and activist Murphy Davis' beautifully moving memoir, *Surely Goodness and Mercy: A Journey into Illness and Solidarity*, engages with the "sentence of death," through community with homeless and incarcerated folks in Georgia and Davis' own cancer journey. Truly inspiring.

Open Door Community Press

STILL DISTANCING

By Faith-Marie
Zamblé



Curated

A few weeks ago, a friend invited me to New York with them to see some art. After taking the commuter train down from New Haven, Conn., we made our way through Grand Central Station,

onto the subway, then up a steep escalator, eventually arriving at the gallery's entrance.

Visiting Manhattan during a pandemic is a fascinating study in strangeness. The Times Square subway station is so quiet you can hear your own footsteps. Sweaty players duel on a basketball court, and I am shocked by seeing unmasked faces in public. Even the experience of gallery hopping, one that used to be extremely familiar to me, feels askew. A few of the places we visit require a signed liability waiver before entering. Each desk is punctuated by a giant bottle of hand sanitizer. This imposing combination does not stop me from enjoying the work I see, however. There are many juxtapositions of color and line that sparkle in my brain. An image

**I FIND MY ART-WATCHING
BRAIN SUFFUSED WITH A CONSTANT
HUM OF FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY.**

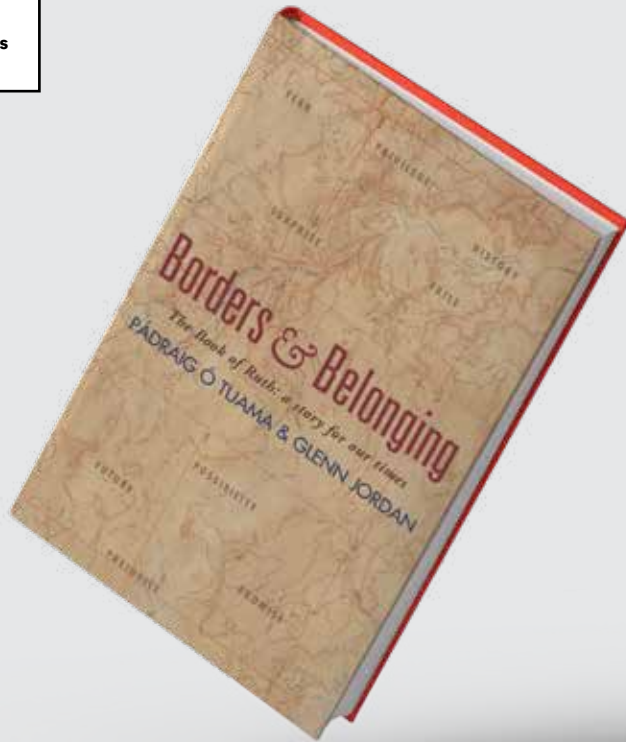
of a fabric store, itself made out of fabric, proves especially delightful. I see some art books that I think I might like to have in my home. I am glad to have gone.

As my friend and I cross the street on our way to dinner, a scrambled-looking man asks us if we are "art people." I am amused, but slightly embarrassed because, in an existential sense, I suddenly don't know. For some reason, this question pops my illusion that everything is the same as it was, that I can look at art as I used to and that everything is normal. It isn't. I used to go to galleries for the frisson of human interaction, the joy of bustling next to other human beings. Now, I find my art-watching brain suffused with a constant hum of fear and uncertainty.

In 2019, the painter Chloe Wise had a show in London titled, enigmatically, *Not That We Don't*. I remember browsing photographs of the show online and puzzling over the repeated depictions of hand sanitizer in these paintings. Kleenexes emerged from benches throughout the gallery as if Wise were waiting for viewers to burst into tears or be sick. It seemed, from the choice of nondescript gray carpet to the rolls of paper towels hung on mysterious blocks, that Wise was designing an avant-garde doctor's office or waiting room. As her glamorous, gorgeously rendered subjects pouted and glowered from their canvases, you were left even more conscious of your human body, with its germs and fluids.

Since the pandemic's arrival, I've thought about this show a great deal. The obvious connection is a fear of contamination and ever-present hand sanitizer. More subtle, however, is the way the coronavirus has added a layer of sterility and distance to everything, from galleries to trains to the experience of looking itself. ✦

Faith-Marie Zamblé is an artist, writer, and M.F.A. candidate in dramaturgy and dramatic criticism at the Yale School of Drama.



THESE TWO IRISH MEN ORBIT THE ANCIENT NARRATIVE OF A MOABITE WOMAN AND HER JEWISH FAMILY.

of a Moabite woman and her Jewish family, asking how “this apparently simple book situates itself at the very places where the tectonic plates of conflicted communities threaten to crack and split apart whole nations and societies.” With an eye to how Brexit-related tensions in Ireland threaten to reignite old conflicts and destroy a delicate peace, and as white nationalism gives rise to horrors in the U.S., Ó Tuama and Jordan explore the Book of Ruth’s extraordinary capacity to move us toward a different way of being in relation to one another, suggesting that “it offers us a way towards the healing of our fractures and the building of new and healthy relationships in the aftermath of trauma.”

Many will come to this story without an awareness of its multifaceted layers. Maybe we know it only for those lines of love and loyalty (1:16-17) professed as part of wedding liturgies. With Ó Tuama and Jordan as guides, however, we engage with the story in a deeper way, meeting its rich commentary on questions of migration and border crossings and its applicability to the most pressing issues of our day. This is a narrative that challenges us

to practice radical hospitality, encounter the “other” with compassion, dismantle our stereotypes, rewrite our laws, reject aggression and toxic masculinity, and protect the vulnerable minorities in our midst.

Borders and Belonging is a delightful mix of accessible and erudite prose. Through compelling storytelling, the authors revive the dramatic tale of a displaced, widowed woman whose courage returns a people to themselves. And through thoughtful, informed analysis, Ó Tuama and Jordan illuminate how this biblical text invites us into difficult but necessary conversations across differences. If there is a book in the Hebrew Bible that most resonates in this moment, it may be Ruth. In this fresh reading, it bursts with new meaning. ✦

Julie McGonegal, author of *Imagining Justice: The Politics of Postcolonial Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, is a Canadian writer and editor.

HEALING THE FRACTURES

Borders and Belonging
The Book of Ruth: A Story for Our Times,
by Pádraig Ó Tuama and Glenn Jordan

Canterbury Press

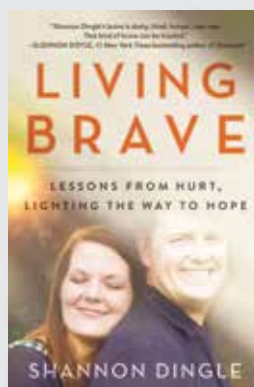
We are living in shouty times. The pandemic has raised the decibels of public debate, as we bellow and bark at each other across social media. And while we initially may have imagined that the coronavirus would bring us together—and in some ways it has—in many ways our civic life has only become more fractured and fragile. The murder of George Floyd last year unleashed a well of public grief and a wave of protests that revealed a widening political divide in the U.S., as did the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. And now vitriol over vaccines from an anti-science contingent threatens the hope of achieving herd immunity.

Perhaps, amid all this noise and tumult, the quiet biblical Book of Ruth has something powerful and profound to say, some reassuring balm and redemptive truth to offer our polarized world. Indeed, in the skilled hands of gifted poet Pádraig Ó Tuama and the late theologian Glenn Jordan, it is made new for our times. In *Borders and Belonging*, these two Irish men orbit the ancient narrative

ANGRY AT GOD

Living Brave: Lessons from Hurt,
Lighting the Way to Hope,
by Shannon Dingle

HarperOne



Shannon Dingle is a disabled activist, sex trafficking survivor, and author of recently released *Living Brave*. Her family's grief over the sudden death of her husband, Lee, in July 2019 resonated with many worldwide. She discussed *Living Brave* with Liuan Huska, author of *Hurting Yet Whole: Reconciling Body and Spirit in Chronic Pain and Illness*.

Liuan Huska: It's been almost two years since a rogue wave killed your husband, Lee, on a family beach vacation. You wrote about his death soon after it happened.

Shannon Dingle: Looking back on some of my writing, I'm so damn proud of my ability to capture where I was then. It is a record for me and my kids as much as for anyone else. I wanted to tell the story and protect how it was told.

Did the sexual abuse you experienced as a child influence how you wanted to tell your grief story? My brutal and raw honesty definitely comes from a place where I had horrific things happening that I couldn't tell. I know how freeing it can be to put words to things. I write from a place where I know I'm the authority on what my life has been and what happened.

You started this book before Lee died, and the pandemic followed his death. How did the book change? It was going to be much more research-based. But I was trying to hide behind explanations and the certainty that comes with fundamentalism in any form, whether faith-wise or science-wise. There are things that aren't going to be provable. There are things that you learn that aren't a piece of research that can be replicated.

Though you have supportive community, you wrote that "some nights I have to journey in the dark on my own." Where is God for you these days? There are still things that I don't get and that I am pissed at God about. I have felt comfortable not being so connected to God and leaning on those who were. I knew that faith wasn't something I needed to try to get right. I didn't want to be the one who was so strong and never cried and was happy all the time. I've lost my ability to bullshit. I'm making my way back to God in a new way, but I don't think sovereignty will be a word that I use ever again.

Your book encourages readers to do the thing that is brave for us, which may mean not speaking up, or defining our own rules about what is healthy. What does *Living Brave* offer in this time when we're so polarized and feel pressure to speak up on one side or the other? I want *Living Brave* to get people to show up for themselves. Being brave is not living into other people's expectations or arbitrary rules. It's not even accepting our society's definitions of brave. I want to give people the freedom to question, "What if I said 'yes'?" or "What if I did this instead?" To not rush yourself or mold yourself into something you're supposed to be but isn't where you're at, and maybe isn't where you'll ever be. Or maybe you don't know. Being able to say "I don't know" is the bravest thing for so many of us. ❖



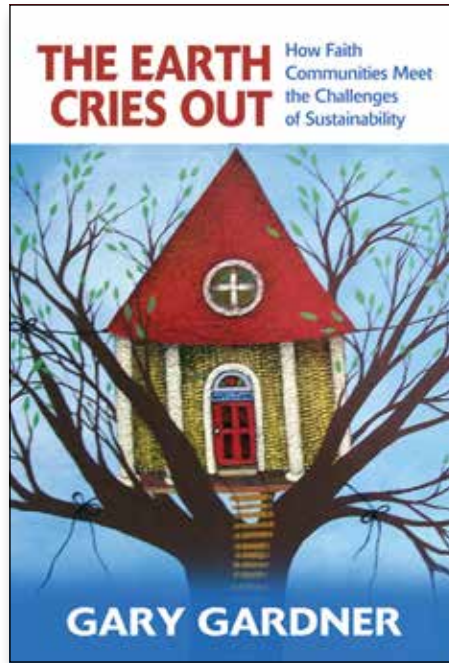
cont'd from page 36 much wrapped up in Jesus," he explains. "I just have to figure out what parts really work for me and what parts really offend my sense of justice, and then let go of those things. That process, that consciousness, it all affects the songs that I write, and I think I really felt that on this new album."

For much of his career, Millsap has written songs from the perspective of other people, acting as narrator for his characters. On *Be Here Instead*, he wrote with much more personal introspection and explored some new musical ground, too. "These songs are tools for self-exploration," Millsap says. "I needed to do some serious soul-searching with my music, and now that I have a little more experience and age, I guess I had a little more confidence to write songs that talk about my own experience now."

With this increased confidence, Millsap has written and recorded the masterpiece of his career, offering his own personal hymns for the world to hear. Songs like "In Between" and "The Real Thing" speak prophetic hope to a world ravaged by a pandemic and racial injustice. "Vulnerable" and "It Was You" push listeners to look outside of themselves to find communion with those around them.

But no matter how Millsap writes or what introspection he undertakes, somewhere in his "deep lizard brain" he looks to Jesus as the hero of his particular story, and there's no doubt that will continue to influence the words he chooses to sing for a listening world. "I definitely don't see all the people who have done terrible things in his name as heroes, but I still think the source is pretty good." ♦

Chuck Armstrong is a church planter and writer in New York City. From a town of about 150 in northeast Kansas, he now lives in Hell's Kitchen with his family.



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SOJOURNERS

CAIN'S LEGACY

By Elisabeth Ivey



We wander round searching for demons
and making them of each other
when we find none. Out of feigned necessity,
the slightest difference becomes a reason
to tame—to vanquish—to stamp out until
we look up and catch sight of ourselves:
rock in hand and mark of Cain blistering
across our foreheads. Beneath us,
Abel fades away—Abels across time: the witch,
the bitch, the refugee, and LGBTQIA+. We grasp
at fading shoulders that crumble to dust. As will we—
return to dust, but first we must wander
with memories of fading light from eyes. Heavy
bones, dense and weary, we stumble through.
Each shape a mystery and a threat. Each shape
fallen, another death. Till we drudge our feet
over earth's last inches. We did it all—we conquered
—and still we cannot rest.

Elisabeth Ivey is a writer and editor dedicated to the flourishing of creativity and imagination.

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Rev. Janette Ok / Photograph by Steven Lee

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SOJOURNERS

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

Scripture passages are
from the Revised Common
Lectionary, Cycle B

By Isaac S. Villegas



Living the Word

God is not a neutral observer of our worldly affairs. “God takes sides,” the Brazilian theologians Clodovis and Leonardo Boff explain in *Introducing Liberation Theology*. God is not

a dispassionate consultant, nonpartisan mediator of divisions, or a disinterested negotiator of political antagonisms. “God takes sides and comes on the scene as one who favors the poor,” Mexican theologian Elsa Tamez writes in *Bible of the Oppressed*. “The God of the biblical tradition is not uninvolved or neutral,” U.S. theologian James H. Cone argues in *A Black Theology of Liberation*. “God is active in human history, taking sides with the oppressed.”

God has already decided to live in solidarity with people who have survived injustice after injustice. The incarnation reveals the partisanship of God—that, in Jesus, God becomes one of the “disinherited,” to use Howard Thurman’s language. The life of Jesus is the story of how God takes the side of “people who stand with their backs against the wall,” as Thurman puts it in *Jesus and the Disinherited*, populations “disinherited from participation in meaningful social process,” groups segregated from “any stake in the social order.”

The Bible passages this month call us to examine where we stand. They illumine the borders of power—the divide between privilege and oppression that slices through our communities—and prod us with a question: Which side are you on?

Isaac S. Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship and president of the governing board of the North Carolina Council of Churches.

“THE GOD OF THE BIBLICAL TRADITION IS NOT UNINVOLVED OR NEUTRAL.”

JULY 4

SHAKING THE DUST OFF

EZEKIEL 2:1-5; PSALM 123;

2 CORINTHIANS 12:2-10; MARK 6:1-13

Nearly a decade ago, a colleague asked to meet with me for an important discussion. I had met this pastor over the years at denominational gatherings. Early one morning, he drove from his town in Virginia to my house in North Carolina. When he arrived, I invited him in, poured us coffee, and waited for him to say what he needed to say. He clutched his leatherbound Bible and leaned toward me. “Do you believe in God’s word?” he asked. “Because if you do, I don’t know why you’ve been saying that homosexuality is an appropriate lifestyle.” He flipped from verse to verse proving his argument against the inclusion of LGBTQ people into church membership, as equals, without restrictions against gay marriage or the ordination of people who are queer.

After hours of biblical disagreements, he ended with a prayer for God to convict me of my misguided teaching and wayward leadership. As he walked to the sidewalk, I thought I almost saw him knock his shoes against the curb, first one foot then the other, before he got into his car. “As you leave,” Jesus once instructed his disciples, “shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them” (Mark 6:11).

After I officiated my first same-sex wedding, I saw this same pastor at a denominational gathering—this was after the regional conference of churches to which we both belonged suspended my ordination in perpetuity and disowned my ministry. From a distance we exchanged a glance. He put his head down, turned around, and walked the other way—a modern version of the Anabaptist tradition of shunning, updated for the convoluted denominational micropolitics displayed during biennial national assemblies.

Many of us have reached an impasse with one another due to a fundamental disagreement about the full belonging of

LGBTQ members of our households of faith. Leaders in authority have asked me to repent, which I will not do, and I've found them to be inhospitable to my biblical arguments. So, we go on, each in judgment of the other's testimony, amazed at each other's unbelief. We need time to shake the dust off after our ecclesial clashes before we can figure out how to be together again.

JULY 11

OBSCENE WEALTH

AMOS 7:7-15; PSALM 85:8-13;
EPHESIANS 1:3-14; MARK 6:14-29

Herod is part of the "one percent," a member of the class of people who feast while others struggle for the next paycheck. He throws a party for "his courtiers and officers and the leaders of Galilee" (Mark 6:21). The powerful eat more than they need and drink from bottomless glasses. Herod and his friends leer at Herodias' daughter—enlisted as their entertainment—in a scene of sexist exploitation.

Amid extravagant consumption, Herod executes John the Baptist, whose head is brought on a serving dish ready to be eaten. John's life was sacrificed for the party, collateral damage for a way of life driven by insatiable appetites and rash decisions.

This is an image of our world—a world where the rich leech their gratification from networks of production, from economic systems that feed on the masses who struggle to buy groceries and pay rent and keep the creditors away. The global financial order enslaves countries and individuals by means of debt—a force of subjugation that intensifies according to the logic of interest rates.

Amos prophesies apocalyptic destruction for these kinds of oppressive worlds: The high places shall be made desolate, and the sanctuaries laid waste (Amos 7:9). This leveling is a consequence of a stratified society built on the foundation of an unjust economy. "They sell the righteous for silver," Amos attests earlier, "and the needy for a pair of sandals" (2:6). For a people who benefit from a system that produces such dehumanizing disparities, salvation will mean desolation. "Why do you want the day of the Lord?" Amos asks. "It is darkness, not light ... gloom with no brightness in it" (5:18, 20). To hope for re-

demption is to open our lives to judgment, to wonder if we are on God's side.

JULY 18

WHEN WE WANDER

JEREMIAH 23:1-6; PSALM 23;
EPHESIANS 2:11-22; MARK 6:30-34, 53-56

Jeremiah prophesies God's condemnation of leaders who forsake their people, shepherds who neglect the flock. "Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture" (23:1). The leaders consolidate their authority with terror. They torment the flock. In distress the sheep scatter and await a righteous shepherd who will care for them with justice.

In Roman catacombs during the third century, when Christians held hidden worship services under the city, the faithful would paint the walls with scenes from Bible stories. Archeologists have discovered that a favorite image was Jesus as the good shepherd, with him carrying a lamb over his shoulders, returning the lost one to the flock. "I am the good shepherd," Jesus says in John's gospel. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (10:11).

To recognize Jesus as our shepherd makes me wonder about my pastoral role. I am not in competition for his flock. I am not a rival for the authority of his staff. Instead, I'm one of the sheep, like the others, all of us looking to Jesus as our guide, our herder. To discern God's will for a community is not the job of one person.

This month is the 15th anniversary of my pastoral calling. I have served the same congregation for all that time. As a member of this church, I've learned how to discern God's will as a community—to struggle with one another as we agree and disagree, as we hash out the truth about the world and ourselves and God. With Jesus as our good shepherd, I've been able to settle into a gentle confidence in God's care, that the one who has called us will not abandon us, even when we wander.

**TO HOPE FOR REDEMPTION
IS TO OPEN OUR LIVES
TO JUDGMENT.**

JULY 25

BREAD AND CHILD CARE

2 KINGS 4:42-44; PSALM 145:10-18;
EPHESIANS 3:14-21; JOHN 6:1-21

I don't trust storytellers who don't mention food. I do not know what to do with history books, with novels, with biographies, that neglect to mention the most ordinary thing about human beings: that we make and eat food. We can't do life without laborers, somewhere growing and preparing food—someone planning out how food is going to get to our hungry mouths. We schedule our days around eating and making sure other people in our lives have something to eat.

In graduate school I read a lot of political theology—books about revolutionary Christian politics. Caught up in page after page of serious arguments and important ideas, the rumbling of my stomach would remind me to eat. The interruption of hunger made me notice that these books did not spend much time on food production and distribution. What were the theological revolutionaries supposed to eat, and who was going to make the food? That never seemed to be a concern. Neither did they worry about child care, which always clued me into the shortcomings of their visions for the world. Who would make the meals and provide child care while they planned for the kingdom of God? Church life has taught me to think about ordinary and vital needs—to prioritize the "tedious logistics" of mutual care, our provisions for bodily life.

In John 6, we read a story about food. Jesus wanders out into the wilderness and a multitude follows him. There is not much that happens—just thousands of people waiting around with Jesus, until evening when stomachs begin to growl. With the crowds around him, Jesus blesses bread and fish, then passes around the food for the hungry masses.

We pass along what has been given to us—heavenly blessings, the gifts of creation, the grace of God. Jesus reveals the inner workings of the miraculous: that providence happens when we share our provisions. All we have is manna, our resources multiplied through redistribution. ✱

"Preaching the Word," Sojourners' online resource for Bible study and sermon preparation, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

Guest H'rumps



JUST DON'T MAKE ME PASS THE PEACE

By Jenna Barnett

On a recent Sunday, my pastors asked the congregation to show up for Zoom church with “something to consume during communion.” And let me tell you, if you’ve never had a tortilla chip as the bread and chipotle salsa as the wine then you might be experiencing a lower tier of consecration. Even my dog—who not only considers the lilies, but also pees upon them—ate from the crumbs of my Tostitos and knew something beautiful and mysterious had transpired.

In other words, Zoom church, even with its lag time and pixilation, has had its perks—but one perk, specifically, above all other perks: While the absence of commutes and underwire bras has been noteworthy, the absence of churchy small talk has been paramount.

My trifles with the Passing of the Peace predate and rival my newer fears of the Passing of the Germs. At the age of 8, I had what my therapist called “separation anxiety” and what

I WOULD REMAIN IN THE RESTROOM UNTIL ALL THE PEACE WAS PASSED AND ALL THE POST-CHURCH LEMONY SUGAR WATER CONSUMED.

my older sister called “OHMYGOD Loosen Your Grip on My Forearm, JENNA.” I did not know what to say if the kind, adult Presbyterians asked me, “How’s school?” or the even more terrifyingly open-ended: “How’ve you been?”

But by the age of 9, I’d found a work-around. Right before the third hymn, I’d tell my dad I had to go to the restroom, where I would remain until all the peace was passed and all the post-church lemony sugar water consumed. From the stillness of the corner stall, I could listen to the doxology and feel a tranquility unencumbered by the fear of looming how-are-yous.

By the time I was 10, my parents—on to me—insisted I go to the restroom before church, and so that was the end of that period of peace. Until Zoom church arrived ... with its blessed mute button and “Leave Meeting” always just a click away. Listen, Zoom church was never enough to hold all the grief of COVID-19. But that overflowing of heartache did necessitate a sort of desperate ingenuity. One that showed us that, in a pinch or in a pandemic, a tortilla chip can be a communion wafer. Facebook Live can be a sanctuary. And there are things we can pass other than peace.

For instance, notes. We could pass paper notes!—ah the chitchat of the adolescent introvert. Just imagine the thrill of Rev. Maria calling out your bestie for sliding a piece of paper your way: *Bring that note to the pulpit, Bri. Whatever you so-urgently had to share with Jenna you can share with the whole congregation.*

I’d also be open to passing a raw egg with a spoon, or passing time (in the restroom! Or with a ninth verse of “Amazing Grace”), or just passing out, because in these exhausting times, what is holier than a post-homily nap?

May the peace of Christ be with you, dear ones, and also with your snooze. ♦

Jenna Barnett is associate web editor at Sojourners.

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